



Anabaptist Network News

Gatherings

The Network has organised three gatherings in different locations in the past couple of months:

- ‘Can Enemies Become Friends?’ at Bloomsbury Baptist Church, London, with David Porter as the keynote speaker and contributions from Bridge Builders, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Christian International Peace Service (CHIPS) and others. A few days before, it was announced that David Porter had been appointed as Chief of Staff to the Archbishop of Canterbury—a very interesting position for an Anabaptist!
- ‘Anarchy and Anabaptism’ at Union Chapel, also in London, with Lloyd Pietersen as the main speaker—an opportunity to explore the history and convictions of Christian anarchism and to reflect on the extent to which Anabaptism shares these convictions. Lloyd has summarised his talk later in this newsletter (see page 2).
- ‘Stuff Happens’ at Chelmsley Wood Baptist Church, Birmingham, with presenters sharing their experiences of spending time with refugees in Lesbos and Calais, and of engaging with people with mental ill-health, plus a brief session exploring Anabaptist perspectives on suffering.

We are planning towards further events later this year and next year, including a conference on Anabaptism and environmental issues, and an event exploring charismatic Anabaptism. There will be further details on our website and in the next newsletter.

If you have suggestions for gatherings on other subjects or in particular places, please do let us know—especially if you can help to host or plan these.

From Postage to Email

Printing and posting out copies of this newsletter is the single greatest expense incurred by the Network each year. We are grateful to those who have supplied us with their email addresses and agreed to receive the newsletters in this way, but we are still incurring considerable costs. We have decided that we need to move towards an email-only newsletter from the beginning of 2017.

However, we are aware that a small number of readers do not use email and that others are averse to reading on-screen or printing the newsletter out for themselves. So we are prepared to continue to print and post out newsletters to those who require them in this way, but we will need to ask for a donation to cover costs. We suggest £10 per year.

This is advance notice of the planned change. Please either supply us with your email address (via email or PO Box 99, Malton YO17 1BW) or confirm that you want to continue receiving the newsletters by post and ask us for details of making a donation. We will remind you about this in the next newsletter, but we’d welcome action sooner rather than later.

Events

27 June
‘No Faith in Trident’
day of action at AWE
Burghfield

16 July
Picnic for under-40s
‘Anabaptist types’,
East London

1 Sept-2 Oct
CPT Training, Berlin

25-30 September
*Transforming Church
Conflict*, Bridge
Builders, Hemel
Hempstead

15-16 October
Urban Expression
community weekend,
Birmingham

17-20 October
*Leading with
Emotional Maturity*,
Bridge Builders,
Hemel Hempstead

12-13 November
Crucible weekend,
Birmingham

22 November
Annual lecture, Centre
for Anabaptist Studies
in Bristol

Networkers

The Anabaptist Network, in partnership with the Mennonite Trust, supports Alex Elish and Mike and Cheryl Nimz as development workers.

Alex Elish

Alex writes: ‘Since the last newsletter, I have criss-crossed Canada with Stuart Murray Williams, visiting Mennonite churches across the country. It was a brilliant experience that gave me exposure to a range of Anabaptist communities in the Mennonite family. We were connecting with churches that have been supporting Mike and Cheryl’s work in the UK; as well as teaching and presenting at public events and having conversations with pastor clusters.

‘Although we visited a range of different congregations in various regions, there were remarkable similarities in the conversations. I have created a little “Anabaptist Bingo” card that summarises the questions we explored.

B I N G O !		
How do Anabaptists do evangelism?	Where do we hear the joys & fears of church-planters?	Can we nurture communities of resistance?
Are we post-secular?	How do we have honest conversations about sexuality?	Will the charismatic Anabaptists please stand up?
Which resources from history will help to renew our vision for the future?		How do we practice radical welcome in diverse communities?
What opportunities are there for developing peace-makers?	How do we engage younger people?	What does re-imagining church after Christendom entail?

‘Pretty much everywhere we went, you would have got a “FULL HOUSE” with this card! In particular, we had many conversations about how we plant and develop churches to be risk-taking, hopeful and dissenting communities of Jesus-followers. A highlight of the trip was the “Pastors Beer Group” where we enjoyed some surprisingly good craft beers in a faux-Irish pub! If you want to know more about what we got up to, please email me (acaellish@icloud.com).

‘I am organising a picnic for “younger” (40ish and under) Anabaptist-types on Saturday 16 July in Victoria Park in Tower Hamlets. This will be a chance for anyone from 100%-certified-Anabaptists to just-thinking-about-it-ana-curious folks to get together, with their children/sceptical housemates/dogs to get to know others who are inspired by Anabaptist spirituality. Put the date in your diary!’

Mike and Cheryl Nimz

Mike and Cheryl have completed their first term of service in the UK. After some nail-biting, they have just received news that their visas have been renewed for a further three years. They will be spending three months in Canada and the US between June and August, reconnecting with friends, family and supporting churches. We look forward to them returning to the UK at the end of August and continuing their ministry as development workers.

Those who receive this newsletter by post will find some information enclosed inviting financial support for Mike and Cheryl. Those who receive it by email have already been sent this. We hope you will give prayerful consideration to this as we look to secure sufficient support for their second term.

News and Events

Anarchy and Anabaptism

Lloyd Pietersen summarises his presentation on this subject at the event at Union Chapel:

Introduction

‘Doctors are on strike, kids and parents are going on strike, our homeless are dying, our poorest are dependent on foodbanks, we are shamed because our government won’t rescue vulnerable refugee children, our richest hide their money to avoid paying taxes... Are we moving towards a general strike?’ This is a recent status update on Facebook from a friend. She highlights a number of real current concerns and asks whether we are nearing a tipping point. The notion of a general strike is central to one form of anarchism—anarcho-syndicalism. So, without using the ‘A’ word, my friend (perhaps unwittingly) aligns herself with anarchic sentiments. In this brief article I want to suggest anarchism as a real political alternative—an anarchism informed by the approach to society of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists.

For Christian anarchists, Jesus’ teaching implies a critique of the state; an honest and consistent application of Christianity would lead to a stateless society. From this perspective, it is actually the notion of a ‘Christian state’ that, just like ‘hot ice’, is a contradiction in terms.

Most anarchists look to the French political writer, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), with his famous statements: 'I am an anarchist' and 'Property is theft!' as the originator of the term. Christian anarchists would accept Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) as the founding father of their perspective. But Gerrard Winstanley and the seventeenth-century Diggers were forerunners. I want to suggest that the Anabaptists should also be regarded as significant forerunners; the Anabaptist emphasis on separation should not be regarded as 'withdrawal'. Separation is a strategy for engagement by providing models as testimony to the civil order—what anarchists would describe as a form of 'prefiguration'.

Contemporary Anarchism

Anarchism as a political ideology should in no way be equated with disorder, chaos and violence. Rather, anarchism rejects the legitimacy of external government and of the state, and the imposition of any form of political authority, hierarchy or system of domination. Positively, anarchism promotes a vision of 'a decentralized and self-regulating society consisting of a federation of voluntary associations of free and equal individuals'. Anarchism developed as a coherent ideology following the collapse of feudalism and emerged at the end of the eighteenth century in its modern form. Probably the best-known contemporary anarchist thinker is the linguist, Noam Chomsky.

Attempts to reduce anarchism to one overarching principle such as anti-state or a rejection of coercion are simplistic. It is best understood as a 'constellation of concepts expressed through particular institutional arrangements'. These concepts are:

1. The rejection of the state and state-like bodies.
2. The rejection of capitalism.
3. A fluid concept of the self in which one's identity is inherently linked to socio-historical contexts and relationships with others.
4. Prefiguration—the means used to change the world must be consistent with the desired ends. An anarchist society can only be constructed from below and not imposed from above. So people must act and organise in ways they hope an anarchist society would be organised.

These concepts are essentially inter-related and this is important. Anarchist rejection of the state, for example, involves developing anti-hierarchical social relationships. In the current

political world, choices have to be made that inevitably involve compromise unless one commits to violent revolution.

Christian Anarchism

The father of Christian anarchism is generally recognised as Leo Tolstoy, who noted that the concept of a 'Christian state' is a contradiction in terms. Tolstoy saw Jesus as the most rational being ever to walk the planet and, therefore, distrusted all accounts of the miraculous. For him the Sermon on the Mount was central. Jacques Ellul (1912-1994) is best known for his sociological work on the technological society. He writes as a French Calvinist and, though he does not think an anarchist society is possible, nevertheless he insists that the anarchist position is the only acceptable stance in the modern world. Vernard Eller (1927-2007) wrote *Christian Anarchy* in 1987 and dedicated this book to Ellul. The Catholic Worker Movement, founded in 1933, consistently describes itself as anarchist. Dorothy Day (1897-1980) is the best-known figure and was described by the director of the FBI as a threat to national security. Finally, mention should be made of the most thorough work on Christian anarchism to date—Alexandre Christoyannopoulos' *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010), based on his doctoral dissertation.

Anabaptists and Anarchism

On 24 February 1527, seven articles of faith were agreed in a document known as the Schleitheim Confession. Let me say a few words about each.

(1) Refusal to permit infant baptism was a fundamental denial of the Constantinian synthesis between church and state. Anabaptists refused to accept the notion of a Christian state. As such, this was seen by both Protestant and Catholic versions of the sacral state as treasonous and Anabaptists were ruthlessly persecuted by both.

(2) The ban was an attempt to exercise discipline within the community without resorting to violence. It provided communal discernment and a mechanism for resolving disputes within the community.

(3) The way breaking of bread was formulated took the ritual away from the disputes over Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. It became a practical demonstration of economic sharing enacted regularly within the community.

(4) Separation from the world was a clear rejection of the whole state apparatus and a refusal to engage with all the trappings of state.

(5) Support of shepherds (pastors) was effectively a rejection of top-down imposition of clerics and a demand for local governance and accountability. This was a highly political declaration which insisted that congregations should not be centrally controlled but should be locally governed. Ecclesiastical tithes were rejected and instead local giving would support local clergy and the local poor.

(6) The commitment to non-violence was not just at an individual level but was again a repudiation of the state. There is recognition that force is necessary for the state to punish the guilty but that violence is to be absolutely rejected by the believing community. Furthermore, we have in this Article a clear articulation of subsequent anarchist thought. There is no way a believer can be involved in government—Christians cannot be magistrates. This was in clear opposition to the magisterial reformers.

(7) Finally, what needs to be understood by rejecting oaths is that this is not merely a refusal to swear an oath on the Bible in court as allowed today. Oaths were the glue which bound sixteenth-century society together. They formed the basis of trade and contracts; they were used to give assurance that the truth was being told and this became the basis of the use of the oath in the courts; and, of course, ultimately they were used to swear allegiance to the state. In refusing to take the oath, the Anabaptists were not just being literalists—they refused to give their allegiance to the state and they insisted truth-telling was to be the norm. Oaths were not needed to guarantee the veracity of a statement.

Conclusion

The Schleithem commitment to providing for local needs out of local funds and to have local accountability—combined with the rejection of private property, commitment to non-violence and separation from the world, the refusal to participate in government and rejection of oaths—all point to a subversive politics that is eminently conducive to contemporary anarchism. Schleithem amounts to a rejection of neo-liberal ideology and, in championing truth-telling, a decisive rejection of the politics of spin. It is no wonder that Kropotkin states: 'Likewise in the Anabaptist movement... there was a considerable element of anarchism.'

Although sixteenth-century Anabaptists were not full-blown anarchists—for they accepted government as instituted by God as necessary to reward good and punish evil—in reality their own experience of government was one of regular persecution.

The Heart of Anabaptism

The series of webinars exploring the seven core convictions of the Anabaptist Network finished in April. We asked presenters from the UK, South Africa, Australia and North America to reflect on these convictions, critique them and ask what they mean in practice. You can catch up with any of these webinars by going to www.brethren.org/webcasts/archive.html

News from South Korea

We have received news from the Anabaptist Network in South Korea: 'This letter is written to share with you that the first official meeting of the Mennonite Church South Korea was held from February 20-21 on Jeju Island.

'For last five or six years, Korean Anabaptist brothers and sisters have had the task of finding ways to plant churches and build strong leaderships in the Korean Anabaptist context. Although Korean Anabaptists know the emphasis of horizontal relationship among believers and shared leadership in a congregation, it was not an easy task to find the means for those who wanted to plant an Anabaptist-Mennonite church in South Korea.

'In this context, there has been a small change happening for last three or four years, because several leaders have bravely planted native Mennonite churches in Korea. The Korean Anabaptist Fellowship (KAF) has been central to the growth of these fledgling congregations. Over five years, KAF has assembled meetings with the eight churches and started discussing the possibility of a Korean Anabaptist-Mennonite conference. During the last two or three years, KAF has formed a task force team for developing a Korean Mennonite conference with these eight churches. People are now beginning to see the progress. Soon we will be having our first gathering to celebrate the first official step of the Mennonite Church South-Korea. Although it has required many small steps, we have come along this path of faith together.'

Network of Communities

Sue Haslehurst has recently stepped down from her role as coordinator of the network of communities. We are very grateful to her for the way she has facilitated communication among the members of this network and for organising several annual network events.

We are exploring fresh ways of developing this network, including increased integration with the network of organisations. There will be more on this in the next newsletter. In the meantime, we welcome any reflections on the way forward.

Study Groups

The new study group in **Cambridge** is continuing to arrange meetings. Please contact us if you are within reach and this might be of interest to you.

There are plans to start a new study group in **Glasgow** too. Again, please let us know if you are within reach and might be interested.

And we are hoping to set up one or more study groups in **London**. We had three groups at one stage in north, south and east London, but all of them ceased for various reasons. If you are interested in convening or participating in a group in London, please let us know.

Anabaptist Theology Forum

For various reasons the last two gatherings of the Anabaptist theology forum have been cancelled. Responses from regular attenders indicate that there is continuing enthusiasm for these events, but there are logistical issues to be resolved. We hope to have more information about future plans in the next newsletter.

Network of Organisations

Mennonite Trust

The Mennonite Trust is hoping to appoint two new trustees at their meeting at the end of

June, but we are still looking for someone with financial expertise. Do you know anyone who might be interested in this? Might you be? Please contact the Trust if you have any ideas at administrator@menno.org.uk

Workshop

Noel Moules has announced the launch of the new Workshop website: <http://workshop.org.uk/> and has encouraged us to explore this.



The fruit of thirty years' teaching in centres up and down the country can now be found on this website and downloaded for free. Information can also be found on Workshop Focus Days and Workshop Peacemeal.

Centre for Anabaptist Studies

Ten students participated in our first two module block weeks in February and April, which were taught by Lloyd Pietersen, Linda Wilson and Stuart Murray Williams. Two students are also studying modules online, and we have received our first application for PhD research. So the Centre is up and running, encouraged by these early developments. We look forward to running three further module block weeks in the autumn and next year.

The third annual lecture will be held on Tuesday 22 November.



The lecturer is **Dr Mary Raber**, a Mennonite working in Ukraine. Her subject is 'Recovering Compassion: Post-Soviet Insights for Anabaptists.'

The two previous lectures—'Anabaptists, the Bible and Discipleship' by Toivo Pilli and 'Anabaptists, the Bible and Violence' by Tom Yoder Neufeld—were recorded and can both be accessed at www.bristol-baptist.ac.uk/study-centres/anabaptist-study-centre

For further information about any aspect of the Centre please contact: Stuart Murray Williams, Centre for Anabaptist Studies, Bristol Baptist

College, The Promenade, Bristol BS8 3NJ or at anabaptist@bristol-baptist.ac.uk The Centre also has a Facebook group and a blog at www.facebook.com/groups/anabaptiststudies, and <http://anabaptiststudies.wordpress.com>

Urban Expression



Urban Expression is currently experiencing a period of growth with a number of new teams in various locations and others in formation. We have 23 teams at present in Birmingham, Brighton, Nottingham, Manchester, Ellesmere Port, Bristol, London, Stoke, Wolverhampton, Havant, South Wales and Northern Ireland, with conversations ongoing about deploying at least five further teams in these and other cities. We are looking forward to celebrating our twentieth anniversary next year.

For further information about opportunities, or to request newsletters or offer support, go to our website www.urbanexpression.org.uk or email enquiries@urbanexpression.org.uk.

Bridge Builders



Chris Burch writes: 'The new logo has now gone public—the dove is still there, but we've used the building analogy by incorporating a brick into the symbol. It's part of our new IT system and new look, which includes an updated website—see www.bbministries.org.uk. Once the office staff have climbed the steep learning curve, the data system will be much easier to work and more efficient—please pray that they survive long enough to enjoy the fruits of that learning curve!

'We're continuing to work on the Business Plan, and the next version will contain some practical strategies for fulfilling our vision, while at the same time moving towards financial stability. However, while that is the long-term aim, in the short term we are spending our hard-won

reserves and, unless something changes, we are due to run out of money sometime next year. We're not in a state of panic—God hasn't let us down yet—but we need about £50,000 in donations, to give us space to put our various work-based plans into operation. These (we hope) will increase our earned income and therefore our ability to sustain our operation on current account.

'Our courses are still full, and Bridge Builders staff are being used to facilitate the Shared Conversations that are now introducing Anabaptist listening practices into the General Synod of the Church of England. (Of course, we have a good Anabaptist ally in the person of David Porter, the new Chief of Staff, and his boss the Archbishop is a keen supporter too, as well as an experienced reconciler).

'Please continue to pray for Colin Moulds (Executive Director) and Colin Patterson (Assistant Director) who carry a big load at present. And pray for the board of trustees, who are having a day conference together at the end of June to reassess their role within Bridge Builders.'

Crucible



The twelfth year of the *Crucible* course—a course for pioneers and anyone interested in mission on the margins in post-Christendom—begins in November.

There are also 'taster events' in Nottingham (2 July) and Birmingham (3 September). Over 550 people have attended the course so far. Is it your turn this year?

Details at www.cruciblecourse.org.uk Bursaries are available in case of financial difficulties.

Peaceful Borders

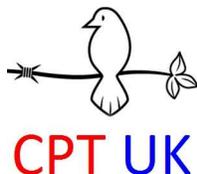
The last newsletter reported on **Juliet Kilpin's** experiences in 'The Jungle' in Calais. Juliet has continued to visit Calais regularly and has now set up a new initiative called 'Peaceful Borders'.

Among other things, Juliet and her colleagues are involved in community organising with community leaders in camp; nurturing healthy

conflict resolution between residents and between residents and volunteers in the camp; pastorally supporting volunteers who have no structured organisational support; gathering a team of experienced psychologists and aid workers who have initiated a network of peer support to offer people when they return to the UK; praying with and for residents and volunteers; being a solidarity presence with those on margins; and being a peaceful presence in the midst of traumatic evictions and demolitions.

For more information, you can contact Juliet at julietkilpin@aol.com.

Christian Peacemaker Teams



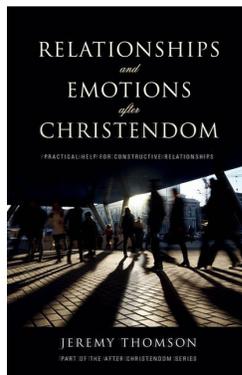
CPT UK is still mainly working on building up a network of supporters around the country. We will meet up with other faith groups to protest at AWE Burghfield at the No Faith in Trident action on 27 June: <http://bit.ly/1W9x5c2>.

John Lynes, an ex CPT full-timer and CPT UK member, recently ran a workshop at the Fellowship of Reconciliation conference, which went down very well. Going forward, CPT UK hopes to employ someone to do more events and networking full-time or at least part-time. For more information, contact Ruth Wilde (ruthajwilde@gmail.com).

This autumn (1 Sept-2 Oct) there will be CPT training in Berlin (in English). This is a rare and exciting opportunity—only the second time CPT have held training in Europe, the last time being London in 2009! CPT Training is intensive and you need to have already done a delegation in order to apply (or you need to show that you are doing one before September). Work with CPT Europe's project on Lesbos counts as a delegation. All who complete training are then eligible to apply for full and part-time positions with CPT. If you are interested in doing the training, please contact Kris Chupp at personnel@cpt.org. If you are interested in working with CPT on Lesbos this summer, see: <https://cptmediterranean.wordpress.com/2016/03/07/call-for-delegates-2016/>

Books and Resources

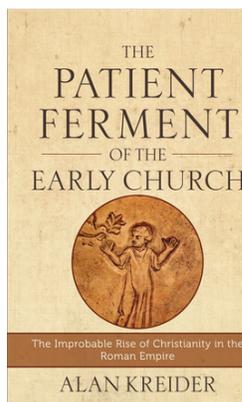
'After Christendom' series



The eleventh book in the series, *Relationships and Emotions after Christendom* by Jeremy Thomson, one of the trustees of the Mennonite Trust, will be published in June 2016 and priced at £14.99. You can pre-order a copy of this book via the email address below. There is an extract on the Network's website.

Book Notes

You might be interested in the following books that have recently been published:



The long-awaited study of the extraordinary growth of the early church, the result of many years' research by Alan Kreider, for thirty years a mission worker in the UK and founder member of the Anabaptist Network. What do the sources reveal about the reasons for the growth of the early church, and what can we learn from this?

Elizabeth Bouldin: *Women Prophets and Radical Protestantism in the British Atlantic World 1640–1730* (Cambridge University Press, 2015): a study of lesser-known radical women.

Drew Hart: *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Herald, 2016): a theologian and activist explores issues of racism and how the church might respond.

August Konkel: *1 and 2 Chronicles* (Herald, 2016): the latest volume in the Believers Church commentary series.

Stephen Nolt: *The Amish* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016): yet another book on the Amish but lauded as authoritative and also compact.

Peter Sensenig: *Peace Clan: Mennonite Peacemaking in Somalia* (Pickwick, 2016): story of Mennonite missionaries building relationships with Somali Muslims.

Mark Loudon: *Pennsylvania Dutch* (John Hopkins University Press, 2016): a study of a language used by some American Mennonites.

Ryan D Harker and Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Eds): *Rooted and Grounded* (Wipf & Stock, 2016): a collection of essays on land and Christian discipleship.

A Request

Dave Close, one of the Urban Expression trustees, writes: 'I wondered if I could ask you to have a look at a small film project I've become part of?

'My neighbour, Mike, is the brother of David Haines, the aid worker who was murdered by ISIS just over a year ago. Since David's death he has been campaigning around the world for responses of peace and reconciliation to terrorism and aggression. Sam Goncalves, a local film-maker (and a friend), has gained Mike's permission to make a short documentary film with him exploring why, when possessing all the reasons usually used to justify violent reactions, he has chosen peace.

'I decided to get involved when Asad Shah was recently murdered in Glasgow for wishing his Christian customers a happy Easter and David Cameron chose to mark that same Easter with divisive remarks about defending Christian values against "terrorists". Sickened by the prevalence of voices of division, I hoped that this film could be one way of raising a profound and persuasive voice for reconciliation.

'In order to reach the widest possible audiences we have decided to launch a crowd-funding campaign to raise £2,000. This will enable us to make the film with a technical quality which will make it more likely to be screened widely in festivals and documentary strands. Also, the connection with a much wider group of people interested in the subject will make it easier to get it into the hands of community groups and activists for them to screen too.

'Sam is giving his own time to the project for free (as am I and several others), but the money raised will enable us to pay for a higher quality of sound recording and production, cinematography etc. In the (extremely) unlikely event that the film makes any profit, this would be reinvested in new films with a similar social impact so no one stands to make a profit from the campaign.

'You can see all the details here at <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-things-that-destroy-us-short-documentary#/>. If you want to support the film, either by giving or by commending it to your friends or networks who might be interested, then we would be hugely grateful.'

Articles Wanted

We welcome articles on subjects that are likely to be of interest to readers. Please contact us in advance if you are unsure, or simply send in an article (up to 750 words) for consideration.

From the Treasurer

Lloyd Pietersen writes: 'I received an unsolicited email from Give as you Live. On looking into it, it seemed too good an opportunity to turn down, especially as it costs us nothing! The idea is to log into the Anabaptist Network's own page on the site and then do online shopping from there at a whole host of stores, including Amazon, Ebay, Tesco's, Sainsburys, etc. For every purchase you make online via Give as you Live, the company you are buying from gives a small donation to the Network. To see how this works: <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/antrust.>'

Contact Us

For further information about anything you have read in this newsletter, please contact us using the address or email address below.

And if you have information or news items you would like included in the next newsletter, let us have these no later than **31 October 2016**.